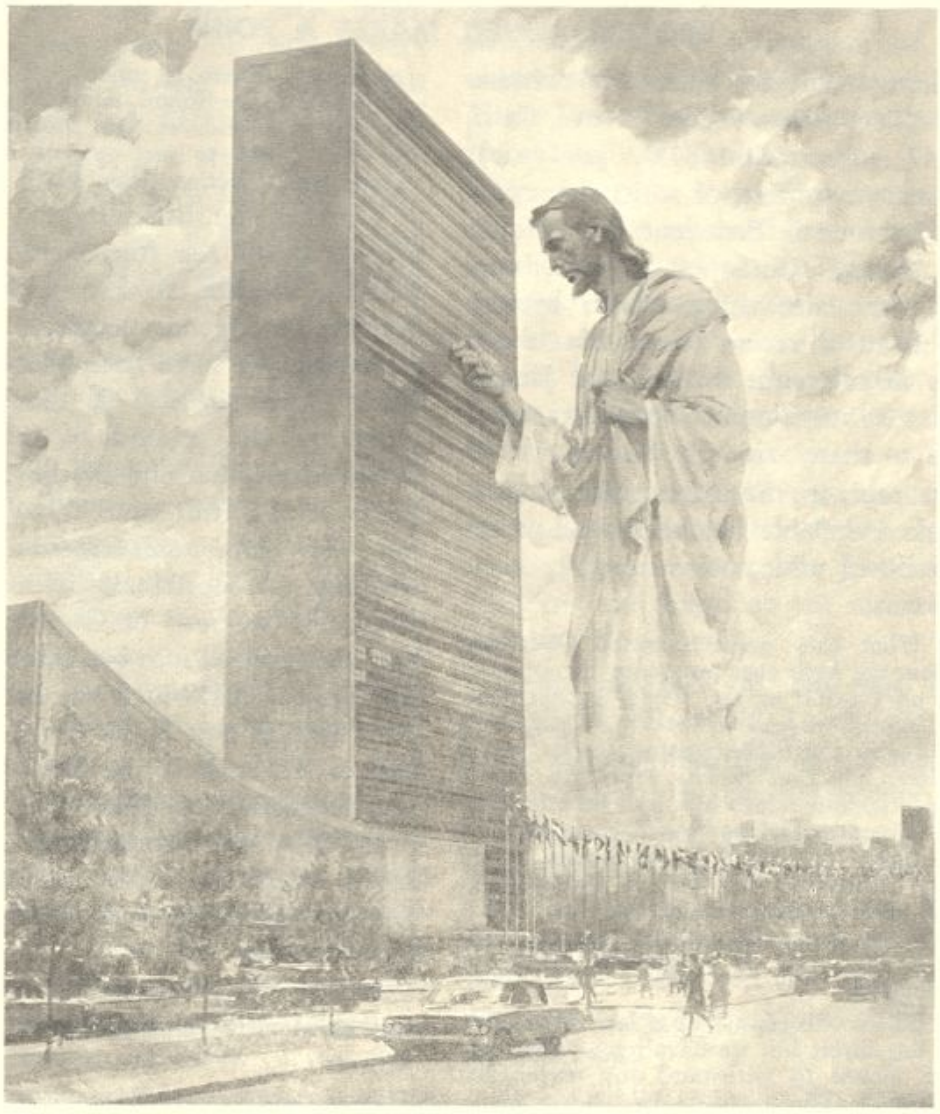
RESTORATION REVIEW



The peace of God as revealed through Christ is the only solution for our troubled world.

See THE PRINCE OF PEACE (page 86)

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Volume 9, No. 5 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **May 1967**

BROTHER LOVELL MAKES A POINT

Jimmy Lovell, editor of *Action* (Box 146, Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. 90247, subscription $1.00 per year), has many admirers, of which I am one. Another one is President Don Morris of Abilene Christian College, who says some nice things about brother Lovell in a recent issue of *Action.* It is in reference to this that Jimmy makes a very important point that I wish to share with my readers.

In reply to President Morris' favorable comments, brother Lovell writes as follows, and notice carefully what he says:

> What this great man of God says about me here does not mean he approves of all I teach or the way I go about it. He and I would differ on a thousand things in the Bible, just as Vivian and I differ, but Don Morris loves me and I know it, and I love him and he knows it. Why can't all of us "stand each other to the face" and do it as gentlemen, much less Christians? The fact is, we are making great progress along this line and I defy the man who can produce evidence that any kind of division is imminent among us.
>
> There will always be a few whirlwinds in the desert but we have long since built our House to withstand any major disturbances. There is much real Christian maturity to be found among us in men by the thousands as Don Morris. In this I have loved to see one of my hopes come true. *(Action,* May, 1967)

Whether he intended to or not, brother Lovell sets forth here the only possible solution to the problem of division among our people, a solution for which we have been pleading for years. Love *(agape)* is the basis of unity and the ground of fellowship. There is no other and can be no other. Unity is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, not our own achievement through working out doctrinal differences. In Rom. 5:5 we read of God's love that has been poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit which has been given us. Through that Spirit and the *agape* that is His fruit in our lives is Christian fellowship possible.

If only the brotherhood at large could learn the lesson of love that Jimmy has learned in reference to Don Morris!

Notice what brother Lovell is saying about his relationship to brother Morris!

1. Don Morris does not approve of all that Jimmy teaches, nor does he endorse all the methods he uses.

2. Jimmy and Don differ in their interpretation of the Bible—yea, they differ on "a thousand things in the Bible," as Jimmy puts it.

3. Despite such differences they are drawn together in the bond of brotherhood. Indeed, they are brothers and they love each other. Since they *know* of each other's love, they are one together—just as Jimmy and his wife differ on many things, but are still one because of their love for each other.

4. Division is not going to disrupt our happy relationship, for we love each other.

It may be a simple truth Jimmy is teaching us, but what a glorious truth it is!

We only hope that brother Lovell's idea of fellowship based on *agape* will extend beyond Abilene to Lufkin, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. Surely he is willing for instrumental music, questions on the millennium, and methods of doing missionary work to be among those many things that he differs with brethren upon and yet enjoys fellowship with them. If he can differ with Don Morris on "a thousand things in the Bible" and yet accept him as a brother, we trust he will have no trouble accepting men as brothers who differ with him on opinions respecting what is *not* in the Bible.

If Jimmy's appeal to love is a guarantee that no new ruptures will come in our time, as he devoutly asserts, then why not let that same love unite that which has long been divided?

Let Jimmy Lovell and all the rest of us resolve to love all God's children, and to accept them fully as brothers, despite our differences. Love is not truly *agape* if it is restricted only to those of our own party.

We thank Jimmy for this leadership. Let him now initiate a welcome to brethren like E. L. Jorgenson of Louisville, the "notorious" premillennialist, and to Dale Fiers of Indianapolis, a Disciple of Christ, and to Edwin Hayden of Cincinnati, of the conservative Christian Church, and to Yater Tant of Lufkin, of the conservative Church of Christ.

Speaking for myself, I accept *all* these men as my brethren, as well as all those they represent. They are not merely cousins in Christ, or half-brothers, but *brothers*, just as Don Morris is a brother. I love them all, just as Jimmy and I both love Don Morris.

What disturbs me in all this is that up to now brother Lovell has shown no disposition to place the Jorgensons, Haydens, and Fiers' on the same level with the Don Morris.

Is he prepared to say that even though he differs with brother Morris on a thousand things, he nonetheless agrees with him on the points that really matter, whereas he does not find such agreement with these other men and the groups they represent? If so, he

obligates himself to specify just what these points are. Are they clearly set forth in the scriptures as conditions of fellowship?

Is it unkind to ask if the generosity shown Don Morris is based upon the fact that, despite a thousand differences, brother Morris represents the right party, while Jorgenson and Fiers represent other parties?

I can see Don Morris visiting Jimmy's congregation in California. If Jimmy is presiding over the assembly, I can see him very properly honoring Don's presence and asking him to lead the saints in prayer, or perhaps requesting that he address the believers. This "right hand of fellowship" he would extend even though he and Don differ on a lot of things, and even though they do not endorse everything that the other believes and practices. He recognizes Don because he is *in Christ* and therefore a beloved brother.

Now I see E. L Jorgenson or Edwin Hayden in Jimmy's audience. Would he react the same with these men as with Don Morris? If not, why not? Does Brother Hayden's position on instrumental music mean more to Jimmy than those thousand differences with Don Morris? Does brother Jorgenson's premillennialism mean so much that he cannot treat him as a brother, even after conceding that fellowship is not based upon the endorsement of one's position? Does Jimmy's love work in one case but not in the others?

It all comes down to the question of who sets the rules for fellowship. If we say it is "matters of faith," we have to remember that what is a matter of faith to one is a "matter of opinion" to someone else; and what the other fellow insists is a matter of faith we want to make a matter of opinion. Our opinions are heresies to the other party, while their opinions are heresies to us. It is a vicious circle, and more vicious than circular.

Our proposition is that we have no right to make a test of fellowship of anything that God has not made a test for going to heaven.

Brother Lovell seems to believe this—at least in reference to Don Morris and Abilene. Bless his heart (and we do love him for a thousand reasons) we want him to believe it in reference to the rest of the brotherhood too. Ah, yes, *the brotherhood.* And what is the brotherhood? We contend it is composed of all who are *in Christ* by virtue of faith and baptism. And to all those I extend the same welcome Jimmy extends to Don Morris, whether a thousand differences over what is *in* the Bible or *out* of the Bible, or no differences at all.

Not that doctrinal differences do not matter, for they do, but what matters much more is that the man is my brother, and I love him with a love that unites, despite difficulties. Once I accept him and treat him as a brother there will be ample opportunity to study doctrinal differences.

Jimmy, believest thou these things in reference to Louisville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis as well as Abilene? I know that thou believest!

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A NEW JOURNAL FOR YOU

Coming out of Abilene this summer is a new journal that is promising to offer a more sustaining diet than the pablum that emanates from so many other Church of Christ centers. *Mission* is to be its name, and it is to be published by the "New Look," if I may use that explosive term once more. The brave young princes of the church will be doing the writing for the most part, it appears, and the announced agenda of topics indicates a concern for the larger issues. And to read of their interest in "the modern situation" one may suppose that the diet will be existential in part.

I am sending in my subscription with a hope for a *bon voyage.* Why don't you do the same? The address is: *Mission,* Box 2822, Abilene, Texas 76904, and the price is 3.00, or 5.00 for two years.

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TWO UNITY MEETINGS

Some of you may be able to arrange your vacations so as to attend one or both of the forums on unity herein announced.

Milligan College, Tenn., near Johnson City, will be the site of the Second Annual Unity Forum, the first being last year at Bethany College. The date is June 23-26, Friday night through Monday noon. There will be representatives from most of the wings of discipledom, including at least four non-instrument Church of Christ groups. Some of the topics discussed will include *Is the Restoration Ideal Valid?, Is there a pattern for the church?,* and *How are we to interpret the scriptures?*

An announcement from Milligan says in part: "Each of these participants will be absolutely free to say whatever he wishes and it is understood that the presence of any person who comes will not imply his endorsement of the views of anyone else. Open and honest dialogue and discussion, with a view to sympathetic and yet critical understanding of each Other, will prevail." The cost will be minimal, being only $20.00 for an adult for all three days, including room and board. Special baby-sitting programs are arranged for the children, as well as Bible school classes. For further information write to Prof. Charles Gresham, Milligan College, Tenn., the only address you need.

The other forum is scheduled at Wynnewood Chapel in Dallas, Sept. 7 -9. These are conducted every other year and they are always great occasions. Write to Ray Specht, 1226 Sunnyside, Dallas, for further information, as well as the next issue of this journal.

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LET MY PEOPLE GO!

Just as I was thinking of this very title for an editorial in this journal, there arrives in the mail a handsome little volume bearing the same name. *Let My People Go!* is not only the cry of Moses and Aaron concerning God's enslaved people in Egypt, but also the summons of A. V. Mansur of Galt, California in regard to his own Church of Christ people. It is a plea for liberty in Christ Jesus.

Brother Mansur is a retired rancher who is among the concerned ones. The book is the story of his pilgrimage from bondage to freedom. But it is more than this. He has collected the writings of a number of disciples, from various backgrounds, who in one way or another testify to the liberty that is in Christ. These writings were eye-openers to brother Mansur, and he believes they will be to you.

But the most exciting feature of the book is that it is the labor of a plain man who wishes to speak in plain language. One is reminded of the prophet Amos and other great men of the soil as he reads from this rancher who writes with a sense of urgency. Not only is his writing free of theological claptrap, but it exudes a freshness that is so vital to our efforts for renewal through recovery. He writes, for example: "One day I was working on a grape arbor at my home when . . ."

The writers who join brother Mansur include Harold Key, Obert Henderson, Vernon Hurst, Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. Articles by W. G. Asher on mutual ministry are perhaps the most valuable contribution to the volume, and they deal with a vastly important and neglected subject. There are also several articles on the Holy Spirit.

This colorful volume of almost 200 pages is clothbound with dust jacket, and is priced at only 2.00. You could well afford to buy several to pass along to friends. It has a message worth reading: *Let my people go!*

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Things That Matter Most . . . No. 5

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

We wish you could see a larger reproduction of Harry Anderson's *Prince of Peace* in full color, which we have so inadequately reproduced on our front page. It is indeed a moving piece of art. Picturing the Christ standing before the busy United Nations building beckoning for admittance, it depicts the relevance of Christianity to our time. As the nations of earth gather in New York to confer on humanity's most imperative need, *peace*, Mr. Anderson sees the Prince of Peace standing without and asking for a place at the conference table.

Perhaps this is idealistic. It may be argued that such dreams do not face up to political realities. What new thing could Christ say about the Arab-Israeli dispute? How would he fare in the fierce debates of the Security Council? What difference could His presence make on such issues as hunger in India and war in Vietnam? And besides, how is the Christ of the first century to speak to the United Nations of the twentieth century? Who represents His voice?

Such questions must humble the believer. He cannot answer them, not really. But he believes nonetheless that there is something important in what Mr. Anderson is saying through his painting. It is the voice of Isaiah transcribed on canvass:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The government will be upon his shoulder! The Prince of Peace should indeed be present at the UN conference tables.

To a world that is aflame with war, race riots, poverty, hunger, disease, and fear the Prince of Peace surely has something to say, some way and somehow. Isaiah sees Him at such places as the UN when he says:

"He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The church must concern itself with the problems facing the UN if it is to communicate with our generation. It is a tragic fallacy for us to conclude that the church's task is to deal only with men's souls. The mission of Jesus was in behalf of the whole man, and He was concerned with "the human predicament." He healed the sick and fed the hungry, and He assured His disciples that when they "clothed the naked" it was just as if they were doing it to Him. To Jesus salvation meant *wholeness*, which had to do with man's mind and body as well as his soul. He came to make men *whole*—not to get them baptized and into the right church.

In 1948 when the General Assembly of the UN issued as a proclamation the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" it appealed to those human rights and fundamental freedoms that should be vital to every Christian. Can Christianity survive in a world where such rights and freedoms are despised? Indeed, are these blessings of liberty and justice, to the extent that they do exist, not the fruit of Christianity? And is it not our responsibility as Christians to extend and enrich these liberties for all?

A listing of some of these rights may serve to remind us of our Christian duty to help build a better world. The UN's *Declaration* includes:

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
>
> Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
>
> No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
>
> No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
>
> No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Every one has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.
>
> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.
>
> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
>
> Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
>
> Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family.

One only needs to read these universal rights to realize how much work there is yet to do. Even in the so-called "peaceful countries" like our own the abundant life is alluding us. The Christian insists that this is the difference that Christ makes. It is in order that He stand at the door of the UN, that His Spirit inspire those who sit in conference there.

The message of Jesus as the Prince of Peace concerns itself with the true nature of *peace.* An amplification of the original term in both Hebrew and Greek might be "life at its best." In the Old Testament scriptures *shalom is* translated *soundness* of body (Ps. *38:3),*

prosperity (Job 15:21) and *welfare* (Gen. 43:27). It refers to the *summum bonum* of life: everything that makes for man's highest good. When Jesus referred to His mission as "that they may have life and have it abundantly," he was voicing the Hebrew idea of *peace.*

In the New Testament scriptures it is emphasized that *peace* comes only from God, which means it is by His creation in man's heart rather than something that man contrives through his own wisdom. In Phil. 4:7 where Paul writes of "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," he is referring to man's inability to produce peace rather than to man's inability to understand God's peace.

Again and again, at least six times, the New Testament scriptures refer to the Father as "the God of peace," This must be central in our message to the world. Peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), not the work of councils and committees. Peace comes as men turn to God, the only source of peace.

Basic to the understanding of *eirene* is the idea of relationship. In Rom. 5:1 Paul sees *peace* as resulting from the new relationship that the disciple has with the Christ: "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is our relationship as brothers that motivates us to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). And it is the relationship of common humanity that makes us pursue peace with all men, as we are urged in Heb. 12:14.

The Prince of Peace as the risen Christ greeted his disciples with "Peace be with you" (John 20:19).

Peace is, therefore, right relationships in every sphere of life. It is Christ's peace that makes men whole by perfecting all their relationships with God, with their fellows and with themselves. This is why God gave us the Christ.

It is not the peace that the world gives: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." (John 14:27)

This is what the Christ has to say to the nations of earth. There is a heavenly peace, which is the fruit of God's Spirit; and this peace, unlike the artificial bonds created by men, starts within the contrite heart. It is inward, springing from a transformed life. In pursuing this peace man will find the life that is life indeed-the abundant life.—*the Editor*

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LETTER TO JUDY

(Editor's note: Several years ago I made the acquaintance of a kindly, if somewhat eccentric, gentleman who professes to care greatly about religious matters and supposes himself as ardent a student of sacred literature as his duties will permit. From time to time he discharges his stored up notions in letters to Judy, his inquisitive niece who lives "up north" and is beginning

to ask embarrassingly direct questions about her religious heritage. In the belief that our readers might like to see a sample of this unusual correspondence, I print below a letter to Judy on the fascinating subject of the Christian heaven. If you should like to read Judy's mail occasionally, you have only to let us know).

Dear Judy,

Your questions about the imagery which the New Testament uses to describe heaven are good ones. I am not surprised that you have decided against literal belief in golden streets and jasper walls, but I am pleased to find you curious about why heaven should have been pictured in exactly those figures of speech which one finds scattered through the book of *Revelation.* If you will forgive me for writing more lengthily than usual, I should like to share some thoughts about these "heaven images" with one of my favorite nieces.

Let's begin by trying a brief experiment. You must imagine the most fantastic place your mind can conceive. Arrange it any way you like; furnish it as your wildest dreams dictate. When you have finished, notice this peculiar thing: every element in your creation is something already known to you. Any strangeness derives only from distortions or unusual juxtapositions. You see, Judy, it is impossible to dream or to imagine except by using familiar components. No matter how fantastic a thing you may create, you still must form it of elements you know about already.

The Martian men imagined by our science fiction writers, for example, may have three eyes and radio antennae instead of nice ears like yours, but the strangeness lies only in unusual number or bizarre placement. Eyes and antennae are things you know about already. You may increase the number, put them in odd places, or make them green with purple cilia sprouting from them, but you are still dealing with eyes and antennae and with color and tiny hairs that are perfectly familiar things in your world. But try creating a monster, or, for that matter, a paradise, by using components completely outside your present knowledge and you will find it simply cannot be done.

Now if you sit down and try to imagine, with no knowledge of New Testament imagery at all, what the perfect life and place would be — a heaven — what do you picture? Isn't it true that you simply project into the future all the things that seem most blessed and valuable here? You may exaggerate these things, and lengthen the time for enjoying them, but they will all be recognizable as pleasures you already know about.

I happen to know, for example, how you prize yellow silk. It is quite conceivable that in furnishing the room you would inhabit in your "heaven" you would drape it with yellow silk — infinitely lovely yellow silk, to be sure, more rich and lustrous than any you had ever owned, but still yellow silk, a material you have had experience with.

What I am going to say to you is that the writers of the New Testament described heaven in the only way possible for them. They used imagery which sprang directly from their own experience. It would have been impossible for them to do otherwise. Whatever

you understand, Judy, by the words *revelation* and *inspiration,* it must be clear to you that these men could not have written in word pictures that were completely unfamiliar to them. (And if they had, then of course no one would have understood them.)

This carries with it quite an implication. It suggests that had the description of heaven been made by other writers in another age and in another culture, the picture would almost certainly have been considerably different. The images used to express such notions as beauty, value, blessedness, joy, abundance—many of these would have been very unlike those you now know so well. Let me try to show you what I mean.

Take an Eskimo in the days before our American culture had impinged upon his. Let us suppose that, like so many other primitive peoples, he sometimes speculated on the possibility of a better life beyond this one. What form would these speculations have taken? What figures of speech would he have employed to express concretely his longings?

Well, the Eskimo often knew famine. He lived for the most part a marginal existence. Life was a never-ending struggle for survival. Food involved risk and all too often was in critically short supply. If the Eskimo projected his dream of a perfect life would he not think of a land of plenty?

But what *kind* of plenty? Fruit? Bananas, lemons, oranges, sweet potatoes, marshmallows? No, of course not, because he knew nothing of such things. He would think instead of seals and walruses and fish, all the food sources familiar to him. His “heaven” would doubtless be thickly populated with complacent creatures sleek with fat and waiting to be devoured by hungry Eskimos.

As for climate, can you doubt that his bitter experience with frightful cold might lead him to imagine a place where igloos are spacious and warm and where intolerable blizzards and unbearable cold never come? If he spoke to his children about this land, would he speak to them of *mansions* or of *igloos?* You know the answers, of course, but I must stress this point several times before I return to the New Testament.

I have been talking of natural factors, but let’s consider something a little more abstract: cultural conditioning. You saw the film “The Savage Innocents” and wrote me delightedly about it. Do you recall the pregnant young Eskimo girl whose mother told her that if she had a daughter she would have to take the baby outside quickly and stuff its mouth with snow so that it would die? The old woman knew that a girl was another mouth to feed and could not be tolerated until a boy, a potential hunter, came into the family. Can you not imagine, Judy, how ardently such Eskimos longed for boys in their family? Is it not likely that they would have pictured their “heaven” as a place where one would have many strong sons, swift, agile, mighty at the hunt?

We need not be in any real doubt about such projections of culture. You told me once of writing a paper on the use of herbs in primitive societies and how valuable some pages were from James Frazer's *The Golden Bough.* That collection has many descriptions of how primitive folk imagined their heavens (and hells) and it corroborates what I have been telling you.

The Norse people lived a grim, harsh existence, fighting constantly to preserve their territory from marauders. Their heroes were not astronauts, but warriors, strong and resourceful. Their social values revolved around this concept. Is it surprising, then, that when they imagined their "heaven" they came up with the Valkyries, those marvelous women who swept down on mighty horses and gathered up dying heroes? Or that they imagined Valhalla, modeled on known Scandinavian practices and buildings?

Valhalla, you recall, houses warriors who fight all day long, hack one another joyously, and return at night to drink mead, eat enormous portions of meat, and be miraculously restored to go out and fight again the next day. Heaven to the Norseman was to be permanent, glorious warfare, with the added delight of having all infirmities and wounds cured each night so that the next morning found one again in the full flower of manhood.

Could the Norsemen have imagined heaven as a cool oasis in a desert? Could he have spelled our those symbolic dimensions given in our book of *Revelation* by use of the recurrent number, twelve? Impossible! He knew nothing of these things, nor would they have meant anything to him in the tales of another until he had been thoroughly instructed in the Jewish culture and its peculiarities.

When some American Indians imagined heaven they thought of it as Happy Hunting Ground. A swift and tireless pony, plenty of bison, and nothing to do but hunt. Nothing about mansions or walled cities or golden streets, because these things were foreign to them.

The Moslem, imagining heaven, saw himself with an abundance of delicious foods and drinks known in his culture, plus seventy-two beautiful girls to serve him through days of sensuous delight. You may be sure that the young ladies he imagined were beautiful in terms of *his* standards of beauty, too, and not in terms of ours.

I can almost hear you now, telling me that when I set out to make a serious point I hammer away at it until my poor victim is exhausted. So I will give you no more examples, but rather ask you now to consider the Jews themselves. It was out of their experience that the imagery of heaven derived in the New Testament. It is no coincidence that the book of *Revelation* also happens to be the book of the New Testament most deeply steeped in the images and dreams of the Old.

The Jews often lived a skimpy existence on their mountain ridge in Palestine and knew well the meaning of scarcity. It is no surprise, surely, that when heaven is described in *Revelation* 21 it should have a wondrous tree that grows twelve crops of fruit, one for each

month of the year. The Jews and Jewish Christians knew fruits of many kinds, so their heaven provides that particular kind of food in abundance. What they envisioned strikes us as a sort of Polynesian earthly paradise where one needs only reach out and pluck what he wants.

You might consider the use of the number, twelve. Why twelve fruits? Why twelve months in heaven where, ostensibly, time is no more? Why twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve thousand furlongs of distance around the city, and walls one hundred and forty-four cubits high (twelve squared)? These twelve are not accidental. They are the result of artifice. Not literal numbers, but symbolic ones, they are drawn from Jewish culture and express precious Jewish truths. That someone from a different culture might have supposed the walls would *really* be one hundred and forty-four cubits high probably never occurred to the writer at all.

The description grows more interesting. The Jew knew the preciousness of water as few of us, Judy, know it. His women went to the well daily, his men worried for fear the well might go dry. A spring was an immeasurably precious thing. The desert was always near, drouths happened often. Is it any surprise, then, that in envisioning heaven he saw that wonderful “river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God”? Or said that God “would guide them to the springs of the water of life”? If you had lived in Palestine, would it not seem unbelievably marvelous to have “living” waters—spring waters—flowing in abundance forever? And where else should a sparkling, inexhaustible river flow from if not from the throne of God Himself, maker and giver of all precious gifts?

You must pause now to contrast this with a different kind of environment. You read a report once to your eighth grade science class about some lake dwellers who build their huts on tall stilts over the shallow water and go everywhere over their “city” by rough-hewn boat. Do you suppose that when these people imagined the perfect existence they sang the praises of spring water and saw that as one of the most significant aspects of their “heaven”? Wouldn’t they have been more likely to accept water as a commonplace and yearn, instead, for things they never had in glorious abundance?

The Jewish-influenced picture of heaven in *Revelation* speaks of a life where thirst shall be no more. This makes perfect sense coming from a dry culture where parched tongues were all too often a reality, but it would have little meaning for an Eskimo whose environment provided him at any moment with snow or ice which he could melt on his tongue if he were thirsty. Do you see, Judy, how one’s total environment affects his yearning description of the perfect afterlife?

The Jew, again, had no intense cold to battle, but intense heat. It was not the frozen body that he often saw during a lifetime, but the heat-prostrated body. His Jordan valley temperatures would go as high as 125 degrees. No wonder he spoke of the welcome relief

of a great rock's shadow in a weary land! Is anything more to be expected than that the Jew, when he imagines heaven, will describe it as a place where "the sun shall not beat on them nor any scorching heat"? What could be better than that?

The Jewish people knew afflictions, but of course so have all peoples in greater or lesser degree. It was this element in his world that made him say with such poetic longing and beauty that in heaven "God will wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Earlier, Judy, I spoke of cultural conditioning. Let's return to that theme for a moment with respect to the Jews. What would it mean to an Eskimo or Polynesian to have Jesus called the Lamb of God? Only in a shepherd-sheep culture would this image make good sense. Some meaningful equivalent would have to be found if one wanted to carry this idea across from one culture to another. Nor is it inevitable, Judy, that Christ should have been viewed as seated responsibly near his Father's *throne.* Persons who never knew kingship and thrones, with their panoply and hierarchy, would necessarily miss much of the connotative value of this image. I should think, too, that the images of washed robes and the heavenly temple would both have little meaning for, say, an Arctic social milieu.

One of the most intriguing examples of cultural conditioning, however, is found in *Revelation* 21:1 where we read in connection with heaven that "there was no longer any sea." Have you ever wondered why the *sea* should have been singled out so conspicuously? A new heaven, a new earth, but "no more sea." Why not mention the absence of lakes, or rivers, or endless grassy plains, or venomous snakes, or flies? What was it about the *sea,* in short, which caused the writer to conceive of heaven as a blessed place where the sea would be missing?

There is, I think, a perfectly sensible answer to this, but its roots go deep into Semitic mythology. (Don't be frightened, Judy; when I say Semitic myth, I do not mean to imply that the Jews we read of in the Bible still believed in this particular mythology I am about to describe. I only mean that it was part of their heritage, part of the mental furniture in their heads. Just as Greek myth is for you, although you don't believe in it any more as a thing literally true).

You may read about this old myth in a dozen scholarly places, Judy, but I want to put it in popular terms for you. It went something like this: an ancient belief which is often alluded to in the Old Testament held that the Creator had to conquer an opposing force, Chaos, before he could bring order and shape to the world. The Chaos monster, once overcome, was banished to the depths of the sea. There may be one last awesome resurgence of his power, but if so he will be permanently defeated and there will never be any more danger that Chaos will vanquish Order.

This fascinating myth, which you may pursue for hours by starting with notes in *The Interpreter's Bible,* I, 451 clearly lies behind the other wise inexplicable statement that in heaven, at the time of final victory, there will be "no more sea." The longing for perfect

security, absolute victory, finds expression in lovely poetry, but one must know the Jewish cultural background in order to respond properly.

Well, you have had more than enough this time, Judy. This may help you to understand why devout believers like Dante and Milton felt no hesitancy in changing the Biblical descriptions of heaven and hell into images of their own creation. It is, in other words, quite as sensible to see God in the form of the medieval heavenly rose, as Dante does, as to see Him seated on a throne beneath which water gushes to nourish fruit-bearing trees. There is no such thing as "orthodoxy" when it comes to actual *description* of heaven. We possess a book which employs Jewish symbolism, but no man is bound to limit heaven to these descriptions of it. It is the projection, in part, of man's eternal longing for a life better than this one, and wherever men have come close to God and known His abiding glory they have framed their dream of heaven in whatever language and with whatever symbols made sense to them in their own culture.

You may do the same, Judy. You are free to speculate widely on what heaven may be like. I only hope that the beauty and power of this age-old dream will cause you to treat it with reverence. No lovelier idea has ever gripped mankind than this undying hope of final union with God in a world free from all the shackles of this one.

Your Uncle,

ROBERT MEYERS

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Review of "Voices of Concern" . . . No. 5

CHRIST AND THE WORD

James D. Bales

Christians must be concerned with Christ and His word. We cannot magnify Him while minimizing His word. It seems to me that some are in danger by trying to do this. Ralph Graham, in his essay on "Why I Left the 'Churches of Christ'", states that: "Christ is the Lord of the Bible. He is greater than the Bible and the Bible must fit Him, not He the Bible. I believe that the Bible is a trustworthy account of the Incarnation of the Living Word and of man's encounter with God. It is the normative witness for our faith and practice. But great as the Bible is, it is not big enough to exhaust the meaning of Christ for Christian faith. Once we learn of Him through the Bible, we will continue to seek Him 'beyond the sacred page.'" (p. 132)

First, Christ is the Lord of the Bible. The Old Testament was the preparation for Him, and the New Testament is the revelation of the Son of God manifested in the flesh. He is Lord of His word because it is *His* word. The word is the expression of Him who is our Lord, and it is a contradiction to acknowledge Him as Lord and to refuse to do the things which He has commanded (Lk. 6:46). We are to be judged by Christ (Acts 17:31), and Christ said that if we reject Him and His word we shall be judged by His word (John 12:48). This word is the word of the Father (John 12:49- 50), which He gave to the apostles (John 17:8). It is the word of truth (John 17:17) through which we believe (17:20).

Second, I am not sure just what Graham means by saying that the Bible does not "exhaust the meaning of Christ for Christian faith," and what he means by seeking Him, in the words of a song, "beyond the sacred page." The Bible does exhaust the revelation of Christ's will to man, for it is the full and final revelation of God to man in this dispensation; which dispensation ends with the end of time and the judgment (Acts 2:34-35; I Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:11-14). "All truth" was revealed to the apostles, or Jesus' promise failed (Matt. 26:20-25; John 13:1-2; 14:26; 16:12-13). The faith has once for all been delivered to the saints (Jude 3). And Graham himself stated that the Bible "is the normative witness for our faith and practice." (p. 132).

Third, our love is not for an impersonal book but for the personal Christ. However, since the book is the word of God, we love Christ's word. We, with the attitude David had, can sing of our love for the word of God (Psa. 119:97-104).

Fourth, we are not saved by a personless word but by the person Jesus Christ. However, His words tell us of the Savior and what we must do to be saved (Acts 11:14).

Fifth, the Bible does not exhaust the meaning of Christ for us in that we pray to God and to Christ (Matt. 6:9; Acts 7:59). We are instructed by the word to do this, but we do not pray to the word; although we should pray as the word directs.

Sixth, the Bible does not exhaust the meaning of Christ's truth for us in that we are not merely to commit it to memory, and store it up in our hearts, but we are also to follow it in our lives. The truth when applied becomes more meaningful to us than the truth in the Bible on the shelf, or simply committed to memory. In fact, saving knowledge of the word of God is not merely an intellectual grasp of God's word but also the application of it to life. (I John 2:3-6)

Furthermore, any truth is more meaningful to us when practiced than when merely memorized. By living it we know that truth in our own personal experience.

Seventh, the Bible does not exhaust the meaning of Christ for our faith in the sense that He will come again and receive us unto Himself in eternal glory where we shall personally be with Him. In some sense Christ is now with us; but He is not here in person. The Lord's supper is a communion with Him (I Cor. 10:16), and yet the Lord's supper indicates that He is not here with us personally; for we observe the supper "till he come" (I Cor. 11:26).

We seek Christ beyond the sacred page in the Lord's supper in that we do this discerning the Lord's body, for so the word has instructed us (I Cor. 11:24-29).

Bible A Blueprint?

Graham affirmed that: "The Bible was never intended as a detailed blueprint of faith and practice. When everything is forbidden that is not commanded, and everything commanded that is not forbidden, believers are no longer free sons but slaves of tyranny." (p. 132). What shall we say to these things?

First, Graham has acknowledged that the Bible is a blueprint, but maintains that it is not a detailed blueprint. That it is a blueprint is indicated not merely in his statement that it is not a "detailed blueprint," but specifically in his affirmation that the Bible is "the normative witness for our faith and practice." (p. 132). Normative has reference to a standard, and the normative witness for our faith and practice establishes the pattern or standard in the light of which we are to measure our faith and practice. If Graham stays with this position, then the disagreement with us would not be over whether the Bible is a blueprint, but over how detailed is the blueprint. A blueprint contains regulations, guidelines, plans of procedure, and such like. If the Bible contains but one principle, or any authoritative instruction, it is to that extent a blueprint.

Second, since Graham acknowledges that the Bible is a blueprint, one could turn his own assertion against him when he says that some of us have made Christians slaves instead of sons. For someone could say: If there is anything that a Christian must do, then to that extent he is a slave of tyranny and not a son. A son, however, is under authority; and Christians are also slaves of God.

Third, Christ has placed us under authority. God speaks to us today through His Son and His word constitutes the standard, the norm, the blueprint, by which men shall be judged (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3-4). God expected men in the Old Testament to obey Him, according to His commandments (Gen. 6:22; Ex. 25:40; I Chron. 28:7, 11-13, 19). Moses built according to the pattern (Heb. 8:5). According to Graham's logic, this made him a slave of tyranny. God expects obedience under the New Covenant. Christ not only commanded that the gospel be preached, but He also said that those who are converted are to be taught to observe all things whatever He has commanded (Matt. 28:20). Faithful men are to teach others, who in turn are to teach the doctrine which they were taught from the word of God (2 Tim. 2:2). Instead of speaking as the traditions of men, we are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). Regardless of how detailed the pattern is, should we be any less careful than Moses to build according to the revealed pattern? (Heb. 8:5). Certainly not (Heb. 2:1-4; 12:25). Graham rightly observed that Christ exalted "His word above tradition" (p. 135). Men ought not to make God's word void through their traditions (Matt. 15:8-9). However, without the blueprint we would not have any means of distin-

guishing between His word and the traditions of men. However, some people would say that if we must exalt His word above traditions, we have become the slaves of tyranny.

Fourth, where did Graham get the idea that "everything is forbidden that is not commanded, and everything commanded that is not forbidden" (p. 132). We are to be regulated by Biblical precepts (or detailed commandments) , by examples, and by principles. Much of our life is regulated by principles. There are areas in which Christ has left us free, and we are free but still within the boundaries which the Bible has set for that freedom. Surely Graham must admit that there are areas in which there are express commandments which forbid us to do certain things, and there are areas in which there are express commands which authorize us to do certain things. Some would say that even this makes us a slave of tyranny. But, of course, such an attitude would show that we have not submitted our wills to the will of God. Sometimes a commandment leaves us free within certain areas. We are told to preach the gospel and to go into all of the world to do it. We are not left free as to whether we are to go and to preach, but we are left free as to how we shall go, and to what specific places we shall go—since it is obvious that each individual cannot go every place.

There are things which are forbidden because they are not commanded, and there are things which are authorized although they are not specifically commanded. This may sound like a contradiction, but within its proper context it is not a contradiction. (a) When God specifies something in a commandment, the only thing authorized by that command was what God had specified. If something else was authorized, it was authorized by another command. (b) On the other hand, when God gave a general command which included a wider territory, but did not exclude anything in that territory, then everything in that general area was included in the general command. For example, if God had said take priests from the people of God, it would have been right to take priests from any of the tribes of Israel. If God had said for them to take priests from any of the tribes, except Benjamin, any tribe not expressly excluded would have been included in the general command. What did God say? He said to take them from the tribe of Levi. He was specific as to tribe, and thus any *tribe* not expressly included was excluded. (Heb. 7:12-14).

Bible Authoritative?

Although Graham states that the Bible is trustworthy and normative, there are some ideas in his chapter which undermine its authoritativeness.

First, his assertion concerning the work of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit works dynamically in sanctifying believers; His work is not limited to the effect of the words of the Bible on the human heart and mind. He works when, and where, and how He pleases, rather than according to predictable and fixed patterns." (p. 134) (a) Who said that there are no predictable and fixed patterns of the Spirit's working? If the Spirit has said so in His

word, we shall accept it. If Graham's word, or any other man's, is the only authority for this statement, we shall not accept it. (b) If there are no fixed patterns, is there any possible way to tell whether or not something is the Spirit's work? Is His work without bounds? If so, what are the bounds? There are people who maintain that the Spirit has led them to commit adultery, to kill themselves, to write new revelations, etc.

How could Graham predict and know that the Spirit did not do this, if there are no predictable and fixed patterns of the Spirit's operation? (c) How can Graham maintain that the Bible is normative, since he can have no idea how the Spirit will work (for he said there is nothing predictable about it), and there are no patterns to His working? Whatever way the Spirit works would be normative for the particular person or persons for whom the Spirit worked, and in whom the Spirit worked. The Bible could not be normative, for in such a case if we studied it sufficiently we could learn how the Spirit works in conversation and sanctification. (d) Obviously God, Christ, and the Spirit work as they please, but this does not mean there are no fixed and predictable patterns of their operations. Are they so changeable that we can never tell what might come next? Have they not revealed anything to us concerning their workings on which we can depend? (e) The Spirit does do work beyond His work through His word, but we can know of this work only by what the word has revealed. As we have brought out in our book on *The Holy Spirit and the Christian*, the Spirit assists us in our prayers (Rom. 8:26-27); He works with God in God's overruling providence; He works through the lives and influences of others (1 Per. 3:1); and the fact that He dwells in us (1 Cor. 6:19-20) influences us for good in that we want to live upright in the presence of such a Guest.

Second, the normative nature of the Bible would be undermined by Graham's position that the Bible is not normative on worship and on church government. In fact, he renounces what he calls the "'blueprint' concept of the Bible." (p.141).

Third, Graham took away the normative value of the Bible when he said: "They should be willing to let consensus of rational opinion of all Christian scholars of whatever church and age be the decisive factor in matters of interpreting the Bible." (p. 141). Who could have the time to study this many scholars? Or is there an individual or a group who is to tell us what this is? And who is to decide who are the scholars? and which are the *rational* opinions of those who are scholars? and how it is possible to get a consensus of *all* these scholars? As a matter of fact, many of the positions which are held by churches of Christ are positions which many scholars from many different denominations say are Biblical positions. And yet, we accept these positions not because they see them, but for at least some of the same good reasons that they see these positions are Biblical.

Then, too, there are many scholars today who discredit the Bible, and who thus think that it does not really make any difference what the Bible teaches. They may know what it teaches but think that something else is just as good. Does Graham think that we should

accept the position of various modernists concerning the nature of the Bible itself? Of course, one could not accept the position of all of them for all of them do not take the same position. But if one accepts their effort to explain away in varying degrees the miraculous in the Bible, he is left without a normative Bible.
—*Harding College, Searcy, Ark.*

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A RESPONSE To DR. J. D. BALES

By Ralph V. Graham

Dr. Bales states, “We cannot magnify Christ while minimizing the word.” I agree with this and propose another principle, “We cannot magnify the word while minimizing Christ and the Christian’s development in his personal relationship with Him.” If Dr. Bales charges that I seek to separate Christ from the word, he misrepresents what I have written.

Christ and The Word

Dr. Bales agrees with me that Christ is the Lord of the Bible, but suggests that my meaning allows disobedience to His word. I believe that since Christ is Lord of the Bible, the whole of revelation is subordinate to Him. The Spirit says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” Rev. 19:10, and “ . . . in these last days (God) has spoken to us by a Son,” Heb. 1:1-2. What I am saying is a matter of placing the emphasis where it belongs and of pointing out that the written word is dependent on the nature and authority of the Living Word. We understand the written word only when we study it from the perspective that Jesus is the Lord of the Bible. Christ is greater than the words which reveal His nature and communicate His will. One is saying two different things when he says, “I know Him whom I have believed” and when he says, “I know the Bible which I believe and obey.” Knowing a person and knowing a book are two different kinds of knowing; they are not the same, even when the book is one’s introduction to that person. The knowledge that comes through a personal relationship to Christ is greater than that which comes from knowing the written word. One can know a great deal about the Bible without really knowing Christ, but you cannot know Christ without knowing the written word. Experience brings enrichment, growth, and understanding to words long held in the mind. This was true of the apostles. Why is it not true of us also?

Dr. Bales says, “In some sense Christ is now with us; but He is not here in person.” I hope that Dr. Bales does not mean this the way it sounds. Physical absence and spiritual presence does not mean personal absence. When Jesus says, “1 will be with you,” is this not a promise to be with us in person? When He says, “I will come to you,” is this not a promise to be with us in person? Is he not with us in person when He fulfills this promise: “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him and eat with him, and he with *me.”* Is this a presence in some vague sense, or is He personally present? I believe in a real personal living companionship with Christ. When He says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” does he not promise to be with us in person?

To me, Dr. Bales seems to deal with words in a legalistic manner. You know the Pharisees treated scripture as a detailed blueprint. This practice and attitude led them into legalism, formalism, and fear. Jesus excoriated them for this and emphasized principle, spirituality, and freedom in responsible love. The fact that Jesus Christ in His nature, teachings, deeds, and life constitutes the principle of authority in the written word does not make the Bible a detailed blueprint. Dr. Bales does not seem to understand that the same act may be done by one person legalistically, formally, slavishly, proudly, and fearfully, and done by another spiritually, lovingly, and humbly as a son of God. There is an authority of power and law, and another of love. He says, “We are slaves.” If we are, we are voluntary slaves and not the victims of tyrannical compulsions either from within or without. Further, I do not see any difference in the legalistic method of biblical interpretation used by the Pharisees which Jesus condemned and the method described by Dr. Bales. He allows no place for the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience today. What is the function of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and in the historical experience of the church? I believe there is more freedom for the Christian and the church than Dr. Bales allows in generic commands.

Bible Authoritative

God has not revealed to us all that He has done, does, or will do. The prophets Jonah and Amos pointed this out to the Jews. Jesus also told Nicodemus, “The Spirit breathes where He wills,” I believe the Spirit of God is free. Since He is free, His actions do not in all cases follow predictable patterns. Where He has revealed His workings, the believer can surely count on God’s faithfulness to keep His word. The word of God is inspired by the Spirit, but He does not state that He confines Himself in His activities to what He has revealed. We cannot contain the Spirit’s activities by our knowledge of His revelation. Since He is a Guest in the temple of the body of the believer, He is not a silent or inactive Guest. And we can know what comes from the Spirit through our experimental knowledge of Christ in personal life and through His activities in the experience of the church. Is not

the Spirit leading us into new areas of understanding and service today? How else can we account for the advances and changes which have taken place in the "Churches of Christ" the past sixty years? Many things once considered unscriptural by them are now considered scriptural by them. Did the Spirit have nothing to do with this? The Spirit still speaks to us through His word and presence giving us new directions, new emphases, and new understandings. We can still, and we must, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Dr. Bales takes exception to my suggestion that we use as a resource in biblical interpretation the guidance, interpretation, and understanding which are provided in the biblical scholarship of the world. Does he not recognize how much we are indebted to others for biblical research in language, history, archaeology, and other biblical disciplines? Does he confine his studies to the Bible and books written only by members of "Churches of Christ" with whom he agrees? Why did he ignore the statement in my article which reads, "Our inspiration and center of reference must not be diverted from the original sources of Christianity: Christ, the New Testament witness, the Spirit, and the faith and practice of the early church?" In the light of this statement it is hardly fair for him to ask, "Does Graham think we should accept the position of various modernists concerning the nature of the Bible itself?" My defense and response to Dr. Bales is to refer you, the reader, back to my original article and to have you evaluate for yourself whether Dr. Bales has treated this article with fairness and adequacy. I do not believe that he has disproved anything in the article. But this is for the reader to decide.

I still consider myself a member of the church of Jesus Christ of which the "Churches of Christ" are a part. And I rejoice in the changes of attitude which are evident in many areas of the "Churches of Christ." May these continue in such a direction that our Lord's prayer for the unity of His people may be realized, "that they may all be one." Whether my position is defensible or not, time will tell. I can hardly claim infallibility. Just now it seems the best road for me. I believe Jesus is Lord, that Christ in you is the hope of glory, that we cannot meet Him in a saving encounter except through the witness of Scripture. I believe we must "take every thought captive to obey Christ" until "the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we can ask or think, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever." Eph. 3:20-21.—*First Christian Church, Plainview, Texas.*

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